TL 3390

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 28, 1988

Honorable George Shultz
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street NW.
Washington, D.C. 25020

Dear Mr. Secretary:

For a number of years members of the United States Senate have been concerned about the conditions in the former Portuguese colony of East Timor, which was invaded and forcibly annexed by Indonesia in 1975. We are aware of the fact that you have raised human rights issues in East Timor with Indonesian officials over the past six years. We applaud your willingness to address these concerns with one of our most valuable friends in Southeast Asia.

We are aware that certain improvements have taken place in East Timor in recent years. However, there is little doubt that armed conflict continues in the territory. Partly because of this armed conflict and the tight control exercised by the Indonesian armed forces over the civilian population, agricultural activity is impeded, resulting in shortages of food in some areas of East Timor. The memory of the disastrous war-induced famine which killed thousands of Timorese in 1978-80 makes us particularly concerned about the current situation. We believe the continuing military conflict in the territory and any renewed shortages of food and medical supplies warrant the careful attention of the United States.

We wish to insure that conditions do not deteriorate as a result of international inattention or increased levels of Indonesian military action. Therefore, international humanitarian organizations should be allowed to maintain and, where necessary, expand their operations to help provide relief and protection to the civilian population throughout East Timor. Such relief and protection should be permitted to extend to any Timorese political detainees still being held within East Timor or elsewhere.

Recent reports about the human rights situation in East Timor are also of great concern to us. The transfer of political prisoners to Jakarta makes family visitation nearly impossible, while released detainees are reportedly unable to return to their place of origin in East Timor. We are informed that torture during interrogation of Timorese continues,

especially in outlying areas. Freedom of expression for citizens of East Timor, including most Roman Catholic clergy, continues to be virtually non-existent. Monitoring human rights conditions in East Timor is difficult because human rights organizations have been denied access. We strongly believe that regular visits to East Timor by respected human rights organizations would help shed light on conditions inside East Timor, and make the Indonesian government more accountable for its administration of the territory.

In the past some of us have called for a peaceful resolution of the East Timor conflict that recognizes the interests of all parties. In recent months, there have been signs in various parts of the world that seemingly intractable conflicts need not remain so indefinitely. We believe that the United States could help bring the parties involved in the East Timor conflict to the negotiating table to begin a process that could end this 13-year tragedy. We hope that the United States, whether directly or indirectly, will agree to play such a role in the interests of peace and stability in that part of the world.

We fully recognize the difficulty of securing a peaceful and equitable settlement in East Timor. We remain aware of the value of the friendly relationship between the governments of Indonesia and the United States based on sound strategic and political considerations. But it is our belief that this relationship can only be strengthened by Indonesia's pursuit of a just and lasting solution to the East Timor tragedy. A significant step in that direction could be accomplished by actions addressing the human rights issues raised in this letter.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

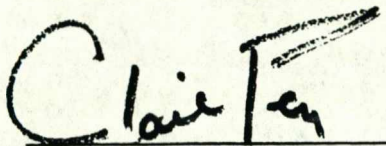
Sincerely,

Carl Levin
Carl M. Levin

Dave Durenberger
Dave Durenberger

Edward M. Kennedy
Edward M. Kennedy

Rudy Boschwitz
Rudy Boschwitz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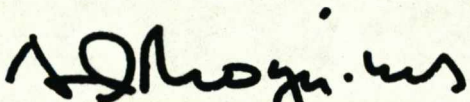
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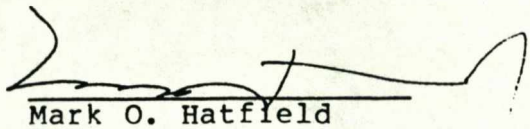
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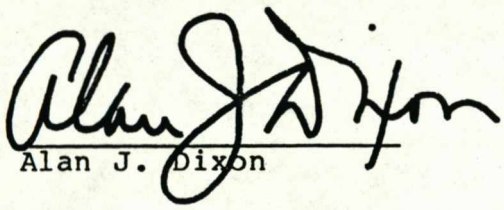
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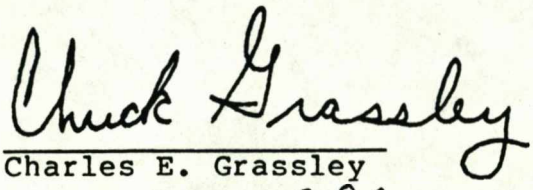
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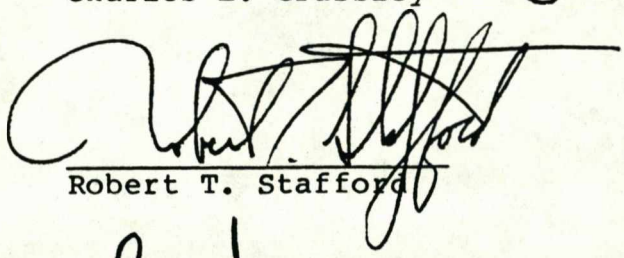
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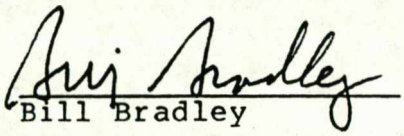
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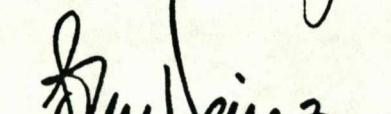
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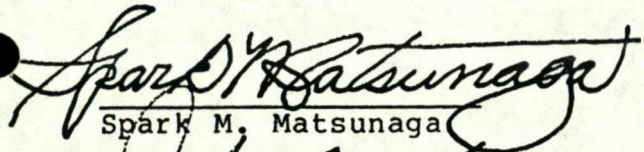
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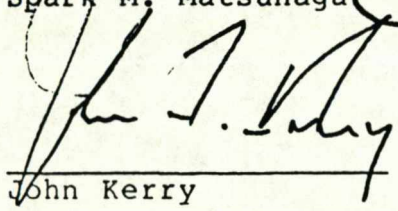
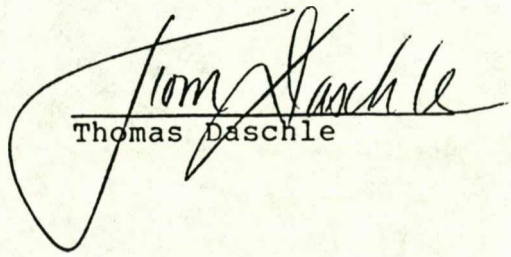
Alfonse D'Amato


John Kerry

George J. Mitchell

Dennis DeConcini


Thomas Daschle

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Nancy Kassebaum

Frank R. Lautenberg

Arlen Specter

Pete Wilson

Lowell P. Weicker, Jr.

Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

Paul Simon

David Pryor

Albert Gore, Jr.

Terry Sanford